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# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 18, 2012

Dr. Robert A. Petzel  
Under Secretary for Health  
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs  
810 Vermont Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Dr. Petzel:

I appreciate your leadership and efforts to deliver the world-class care to our nation's veterans. I recently received a letter from a constituent that raised a number of privacy concerns, and I ask that you work with me to ensure that we do everything we can to protect our veterans from identity theft.

I understand that Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Centers issue wristbands and clothing bags to patients that include their full Social Security numbers. The bags and wristbands could be taken off the premises of VA facilities and disposed of in public areas. As you know, identity theft is a growing problem, and using personally identifiable information in such a public manner provides unscrupulous individuals with the tools necessary to perpetrate all sorts of consumer fraud, including tax and credit card fraud.

Social Security numbers are closely guarded by their owners and are rarely shared even within families. The last thing veterans and their families should have to worry about while utilizing the VA hospital system is the potential for identity theft.

I ask that you strongly consider adjusting your patient identification system to minimize the potential for identity theft. If you are unable to accomplish this administratively and need a legislative solution, please contact me and I will work with the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee to correct the problem.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Sherrod Brown  
United States Senator